

Phase 2 is 'Colours of Tasmania'. Fairfax online and print publications are also being used for the 'Colours of Tasmania' phase of the campaign, and include a mix of editorial, advertorials, press advertising, online banners and links. Tourism Tasmania has provided each zone with a campaign landing page as part of the mandatory campaign commitments, which directs consumers to individual zone pages on discovertasmania.com within the package. Tourism Tasmania has purchased predetermined search words, on behalf of partnering zone marketing groups, to improve search capabilities. Tourism Tasmania is also communicating to a database of more than 20 000 people via a monthly electronic direct-mail newsletter, in dedicated areas. On the newsletter is paid advertising by zone marketing groups, and it can be posted. As part of the associated PR campaign a series of installations in key locations in the Melbourne CBD has been purchased. The installations will be representative of autumn. I think the Liberal Party's time has expired at this stage so we need to move to the Greens private members' time. But I reserve my right to speak on this matter when it comes up next time.

Debate adjourned.

FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT BILL 2008 (No. 11)

Second Reading

[3.46 p.m.]

Mr McKIM (Franklin - Leader of the Greens - 2R) - Mr Speaker, I move –

That the bill be now read the second time.

This is a very simple piece of legislation that we are proposing today and we are having to do this because, despite former Premier, Paul Lennon, announcing well over a year ago that he supported fixed terms in this House, we still have not seen a bill hit the table that would provide for fixed-term elections in Tasmania and fixed-term Parliaments. The philosophy behind fixed terms and their benefits to communities and economies is quite well understood.

Given that, belatedly, all three political parties have announced that they have at least a philosophical position of supporting fixed parliamentary terms, I do not intend to go into the benefits in any detail because I suspect that I am preaching to the converted.

The continual speculation of early elections is not helpful in terms of investor or economic confidence in Tasmania. When we have a circumstance whereby Premiers of the day can decide that an election will be called on their timetable, it is intrinsically unfair for opposition parties.

That is something which pertains, no matter who is in government. I am not suggesting that it is against any political party. I make the point in general terms that it is unfair on all opposition parties and for independent members of the public who may be seeking election to parliament, if the premier of the day can simply on a whim drive out to Government House and advise the Governor to dissolve the House and issue writs for an election.

It is instructive to look at a time line in relation to fixed terms in Tasmania. Ray Groom in 1992 introduced the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Special Provisions Bill and it was debated on 10 November and passed the House with the support of all three parties who are currently represented in the House.

We can fast-forward to 2005 when the Greens introduced a bill to provide for fixed-term elections in Tasmania and it was debated on 15 June 2005 and did not pass this House, being voted against by all Labor and Liberal members of the House at that time.

That was a shame because that would have fixed the date of the 2006 election but for reasons that I am still not clear on the Liberal Opposition decided not to support fixed terms at that time.

Subsequent to that, the Liberal Party changed their public policy position on this matter under the leadership of Will Hodgman. I welcome that change. That has been reflected in various public statements made by Mr Hodgman but also by the tabling of a bill which is framed slightly differently from this bill but nevertheless does provide concrete evidence of a policy change by the Liberal Party to support fixed-term elections.

Last cab off the rank was the Labor Party, as they so often are in this State, and this was during the period of, 'Let's remake Paul Lennon as Premier'. I remember with some hilarity his attempts to remake himself. He came out one day and claimed to be a climate change champion, all the while supporting the timber industry emitting massive levels of carbon and refusing to have them comprehensively audited. He also said he was going to solve the homeless problem in Tasmania, which of course the current Premier has backed away from to a degree. Mr Lennon also made a commitment to fixed terms of Parliament. It is interesting that it is well over a year since Paul Lennon made that commitment and we still have not seen a bill hit the table, despite constant rumours and speculation from many different stakeholders and elements of the media that we might be looking at an early election in Tasmania.

What the Greens' bill seeks to do, and what it would do if it passed this place, is simply to fix the date of the next election. I am very glad that the Premier has come into the Chamber and I thank him for his attendance during this debate. I thought I heard him say, or agree with Tim Cox on ABC radio last week, that his bill would not fix the date for the next election. I think this would be an opportunity for the Premier to clarify that matter because it had been my understanding that in fact the bill Mr Bartlett has been promising for some time would fix the date of the next State election. I have not checked the transcript, but I thought I heard him say – and other people have raised this with me - that Mr Bartlett agreed with the proposition put to him by Tim Cox that his bill would not fix the date of the next State election, so I just ask if the Premier could clarify that matter for the House because I think it is a crucial issue.

There are many issues of detail surrounding fixed terms and one of the matters I have thought a lot about includes triggers for an early election. I should pause here to thank DPAC officers for coming in to brief me on the Government's initial proposals in relation to how they could move forward to fix parliamentary terms in Tasmania. I should also thank the Premier for consulting with me, and I believe with the Leader of the Opposition, in relation to his proposals. I requested a briefing from DPAC and I was very

happy to receive a briefing from two excellent officers from the Department of Premier and Cabinet and was happy to use that opportunity to give them the Greens' feedback in relation to the consultation process that the Premier initiated.

I had some concerns with some of the trigger mechanisms that were proposed, but I also had concerns - and I should place them on the record here - that what was being proposed was a situation whereby the blocking of supply by the upper House would send the House of Assembly out to an election but not the upper House. I want to be very clear about my view on this matter. If the upper House wants to block a budget they should have the right to do so, as they have had throughout their history, but they should face the people at the same time as the House of Assembly in that circumstance. It is quite unacceptable, in my view, for the Legislative Council to have the power to block supply and send the House of Assembly to an election but not go to face the people themselves.

I have made that position known in conversation with various people but I believe that is the first time I have placed it on the public record. I want to be very clear that I fundamentally have a problem with the upper House being able to conduct itself in such a way that sends the House of Assembly to an election without also facing the people themselves. The concept of a double dissolution is in no way a strange one in Australia. In fact, there are many triggers that would cause a double dissolution election to occur at the Federal level and my advice from the Electoral Commissioner is that there is nothing that would prevent the Electoral Commission from running a double dissolution election in Tasmania, should that ever occur.

As I said, what our bill does is simply to fix the date of the next election in Tasmania, and the date we believe it ought to be fixed is 20 March 2010. I am aware of some discussions around this State, and I have received representations from the ABC about this issue, as I understand the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition also have. I accept that this would cause a little bit of difficulty for the ABC, although I suspect Antony Green, the ABC's respected election analyst, would actually choose to come to Tasmania rather than South Australia, given that both of those elections would be on the same day if we chose 20 March as the date for the next election.

The reason I think Antony Green would come down to Tasmania is that our elections are far more interesting than South Australia's. They are far more interesting; the campaigns are more interesting; we have a more -

Mr Bartlett - It will be interesting in the tally room when your Leader spits the dummy, too.

Mr McKIM - I beg your pardon?

Mr Bartlett - Does the nana - that's always interesting.

Mr McKIM - Well, they are interesting. We have a very politically engaged community in Tasmania, and I think it is to the credit of our community that we do. I believe that our electoral system is also more interesting than South Australia's, and that is fundamentally because we have a proportional representation system for our lower House and they do not. I think it makes it more interesting intellectually and politically, and to be quite frank, I think it makes our House of Assembly a more interesting place to

be, given that we do in fact have proportional representation and therefore parties and candidates that may not be able to achieve 50 per cent plus one of the vote still have a voice in this place, and people who vote for parties and candidates that may not be able to achieve 50 per cent plus one of the vote in any seat still have a voice in this place. I think that is fundamental for democracy and I was very pleased to hear the Leader of Government Business in the House reaffirm his support for Hare-Clark this morning during another debate.

As I said, I am cognisant of some issues around 20 March, but all things considered, the Greens believe that this is an appropriate date for the next election in Tasmania. Given that the Premier has not made his contribution yet and therefore has not had an opportunity to respond to my seeking of the clarification around whether the bill that he says he intends to table soon will in fact fix the date for the next election, the point I would like to make is that this bill does not seek to fix terms going forward, apart from the next election. Ultimately the next election is the important issue, but I do want to be clear that the Greens have a philosophical position and a longheld policy position supporting fixed terms in perpetuity in Tasmania, so I would not like this bill to be misrepresented in any way by anyone who may participate in this debate.

There are very good reasons we should have certainty soon around the date of the next election. If this bill were passed, Mr Speaker, it would immediately halt any speculation from many people that we may be going to an early election. I know the Premier has repeatedly reaffirmed his commitment to going to the polls in March 2010, but let us face it, this is the Premier who drew the line in the sand in relation to the pulp mill, and this is the Premier who watched as that line in the sand was erased by every wave that washed up on the beach and who shifted his position time after time on that issue. This is a premier who told the Tasmanian people that Government support for the pulp mill would cease if construction had not commenced by November last year, but this is a premier who continues to offer government support to the pulp mill well after the expiry of his self-imposed deadline. So can Mr Bartlett be trusted when he gives commitments? Not always, unfortunately. Can he be trusted on this one? I do not know but would it not reaffirm the Tasmanian people's view of him as a trustworthy person - if in fact that is what they believe - if he were to vote in favour of this bill today? What this bill does is make it very clear that the next election will be in March 2010. It would be good for the economy, for the community and for politics in Tasmania if this bill were passed.

I would like to give all members the opportunity to speak, so with those words I commend the bill to the House.

[4.01 p.m.]

Mr BARTLETT (Denison - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on the bill that is before the House. What will become clear to the House after my contribution is that, firstly, the person who should be questioned by Tasmanians about their trust in making commitments is the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens. Secondly, what will be clearly evident to the House after this contribution is that this Leader is nothing different at all from the former Leader of the Tasmanian Greens who originally brought this bill in - that is, he much prefers stunts over substance. I will explain why both of those things are true. No-one can trust commitments that he makes publicly and he is committed to stunts and political playtime over real substance on matters that are extremely important to our democracy.

As the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens well knows, in December 2008 I wrote to the Liberal Leader, the Greens Leader, the Governor, the Solicitor-General, the President of the Legislative Council, clerks of both Houses of Parliament, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission and Parliamentary Labor Party members regarding the development of legislation to provide for fixed term elections. I sought comments on a draft Constitution Act Amendment Bill specifically to seek support for the concept of fixed-term elections and I posed some questions in relation to the proposed date for elections and triggers for early elections. The triggers for early elections related to motions of no-confidence in the Government, rejection of supply bills and rejection of bills of special importance. This, I can absolutely assure the House, was a genuine attempt to consult with my fellow leaders of parties –

Mr McKim *interjecting.*

Mr BARTLETT - Why did you not respond to it then?

Mr McKim - I did.